



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

## *A Consumer's Guide to*



# Naturopathic Medicine

## What is Naturopathic Medicine?

Naturopathic medicine is a distinct and comprehensive system of primary health care that uses natural methods and substances to support and stimulate the body's self-healing process. It is distinguished by the principles on which its practice is based. These principles include:

- 1. The Healing Power of Nature:** Naturopathic doctors (NDs) trust in the body's inherent wisdom to heal itself.
- 2. Identify and Treat the Cause:** Look beyond the symptoms to effectively address the underlying cause(s) of illness.
- 3. First Do No Harm:** Seek to utilize the most natural, least invasive, and least toxic therapies first.
- 4. Doctor as Teacher:** The primary role of an ND is a teacher who educates and encourages people to take responsibility for their own health and to take steps to achieve and maintain optimal health.
- 5. Treat the Whole Person:** Total health includes physical, emotional, mental, genetic, environmental, social, spiritual, and other factors.
- 6. Prevention:** Encourage and emphasize disease prevention and focus on promoting health and wellness.



**N**aturopathic doctors are trained in a wide variety of complementary and alternative therapies, including:

- Herbal and Homeopathic Medicine
- Clinical Nutrition and Diet
- Vitamins, Amino Acids, Minerals, Enzymes, and Nutraceuticals
- Physical Medicine such as Massage, Bodywork, Exercise Therapy, and Hydrotherapy
- Counseling and Behavioral Therapies
- Health and Lifestyle Counseling

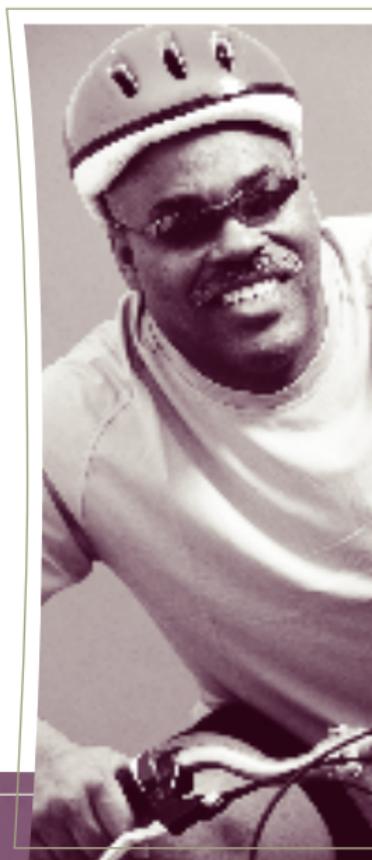
In addition, NDs may prescribe hormones. They may also order other prescription drugs in collaboration with a medical doctor.

## **Why Visit a Naturopathic Doctor?**

If you are looking for any or all of the following:

- a primary health care provider
- treatment for acute or chronic conditions
- a prevention-oriented holistic approach to your health
- someone to work in an integrated way with your current medical doctor

Naturopathic medical care can benefit all Californians, from those looking for help with a specific health condition to





those seeking to improve general health and wellness. NDs treat infants to senior citizens, men and women, and those in all stages of health and disease. Naturopathic medicine can benefit people who prefer a natural approach to their health care as well as those seeking integrated solutions to their health needs.

## **What to Expect from a Visit to a Naturopathic Doctor**

Discussing your needs with a naturopathic doctor will help to focus your care. A typical first visit with an ND lasts 60–90 minutes and includes

taking a relevant health history, conducting an appropriate examination, and making recommendations for treatment. It may include gathering information such as laboratory test results, medical records, a diet diary, and other information. Follow-up visits vary in length and frequency depending on the individual nature of the health issues being addressed, therapies being utilized, and other treatment goals.



NDs have different styles and areas of emphasis in their practices. Some may act as general practitioners—some may focus on particular areas of health such as detoxification or immune support, and others may focus on particular therapies such as homeopathy or nutrition. Selecting a naturopathic doctor who is right for you depends on the type of condition for which you are seeking help and the types of therapies that interest you.

When working with a naturopathic doctor, plan to be actively involved in your treatment. Your ND may work with you to change your diet or exercise habits, teach you ways to reduce stress, as well as use supplements, vitamins, herbs, and other medicines and treatments to help you meet your goals. Ask questions about your treatment and inform your ND about signs of improvement or stubborn symptoms. Your ND may consider further diagnostic tests, changes in your treatment plan, or referrals to other health care professionals.

## **Insurance Coverage for Naturopathic Care**

More and more insurance companies are covering naturopathic medical care. Ask your carrier about coverage or reimbursement.

If you have insurance that does not cover naturopathic medical care, use of a Health Savings Account (HSA) or flexible spending account may cover this



care. Check with your employer to determine if one of these options is available to you.

## **How Do I Find a Licensed Naturopathic Doctor?**

You can access a list of licensed naturopathic doctors by selecting “License Look-up” on the California Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine’s web site at:  
[www.naturopathic.ca.gov](http://www.naturopathic.ca.gov)

## **Naturopathic Medical Training and Education**

Naturopathic doctors attend four-year, graduate-level, accredited naturopathic medical schools. NDs are trained as primary care practitioners. Training covers a wide range of therapies as well as science and clinical courses. An important aspect of naturopathic medical training is learning about other health care professions and appropriate referral patterns.





## **Naturopathic Doctors in California**

In order to be licensed as a naturopathic doctor in California, NDs must graduate from a school accredited by the Council of Naturopathic Medical Education that offers a graduate degree of Doctor of Naturopathy or Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine. The education requirements consist of at least 4,100 hours of training, of which not less than 2,500 hours are academic training and not less than 1,200 hours are supervised clinical training. ND license candidates must also pass a licensing exam that is administered by the North American Board of Naturopathic Examiners.

## **California Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine**

The Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine was established by the Legislature as part of the Department of Consumer Affairs, and began licensing NDs in January 2005. The Bureau is designed as a resource for California consumers who choose naturopathic doctors for their healthcare.

In addition to licensing, the Bureau provides license status, investigates consumer complaints, and, if needed, pursues

disciplinary actions against licensed NDs. Licensure ensures that naturopathic doctors have met the professional standards, passed the required examination(s), and have met ongoing educational requirements that help them stay current with professional practice. Please visit the Bureau's Web site for additional information at [www.naturopathic.ca.gov](http://www.naturopathic.ca.gov)

## **How Are Complaints Filed?**

You can obtain a complaint form by writing to the Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine, e-mailing your request using the Web site, or by calling the Bureau at (916) 574-7991 or the Department of Consumer Affairs Hotline at (800) 952-5210.

## **Other Resources**

The California Naturopathic Doctors Association (CNDA) is a professional association of naturopathic doctors in California. Contact information:

1121 "L" Street, Suite 610,  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(209) 245-3521  
[www.calnd.org](http://www.calnd.org)

The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) is a national professional society representing licensed or licensable naturopathic physicians. Contact information:

4435 Wisconsin Ave NW, Suite 403  
Washington, DC 20016  
Toll free: 1-866-538-2267  
[www.naturopathic.org](http://www.naturopathic.org)

